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RICK LARSEN
2ND DISTRICT, WASHINGTON

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4702

November 3, 2003

COMMITTEES:
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ARMED SERVICES

Ms. Jane Doe
1234 Freedom Way
Everett, Washington 98201

Dear Jane:

I wanted to take a few moments to talk to you about some important developments regarding our fight for full funding of concurrent receipt and increased funding for the VA. As a member of the House Armed Services Committee and your Congressman I can assure you that concurrent receipt and VA funding are top priorities of mine in the 108th Congress.

As you know I am a co-sponsor of the Retired Pay Restoration Act of 2003 (H.R. 303). H.R. 303 is a bipartisan proposal to immediately authorize concurrent receipt, the full payment of both retirement pay and disability compensation. The current version has 175 Democrats and 170 Republicans. Even with these 345 co-sponsors the House Majority Leadership has refused to schedule the bill for a vote.

As a result, a rarely used procedure, a discharge petition, was filed on June 12, 2003. A discharge petition in the House of Representatives is a way for Members to force a bill to the floor for a vote. I was one of the first Members of Congress to sign onto the petition to force a vote on H.R. 303. A majority (218) of House Members must sign the petition. To date, 200 Democrats, one Republican, and one Independent have signed the petition.

I also wanted to update you on the Senate's approval of concurrent receipt funding within the Defense Authorization bill for fiscal year 2004. Unfortunately, the House approved no funding in its version of the Defense Authorization bill.

Since the House and Senate passed different versions of the Defense Authorization legislation the two chambers must reconcile their differences in a conference committee. The administration has once again threatened to veto the Defense Authorization Act if language permitting full concurrent receipt funding is included. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld has stated that he "would join other senior advisors to the President in recommending that he veto the bill" if it "authorized concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and veterans' disability compensation benefits, or expands TRICARE."

Secretary Rumsfeld added that full funding of concurrent receipt "would drain resources from important programs benefiting our military, such as continued improvements in pay, quality of life, readiness, and other pressing requirements" (Secretary Rumsfeld to the Honorable Duncan Hunter, Washington D.C., 8 July 2003, Letter).

The administration's threat of a veto implies that we cannot pay our veterans what they have dutifully earned through their sacrifices to serve and protect our nation.

I am also closely monitoring VA funding, which has been cut dramatically by both the Budget Committee and the Appropriators. On June 25, 2003 the House of Representatives passed the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2004 (H.R. 2861). H.R. 2861 contained \$1.8 billion less than was budgeted for Fiscal Year 2004 and House Leadership refused to allow a vote to increase VA funding. I voted against H.R. 2861 in order to make it clear to House leadership that veterans funding cannot continue to be cut.

I would also like to take this opportunity to inform you of the Combat Related Special Compensation Package (CRSC), which was recently expanded in the Defense Authorization bill. CRSC applies to retired members of any Uniformed Service that suffer from a combat related disability. Instructions, eligibility requirements, and an electronic application are available on the Web at <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/crsc>

Please be assured that I am in full support of America's veterans, they have demonstrated their commitment to the United States, and since then have been treated unfairly. I will continue to fight for the passage of full concurrent receipt as well as increased VA funding.

As always, I hope all is well in Everett.

Sincerely,



Rick Larsen
U.S. Representative
Washington State - 2nd District